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## ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

Portrayed by Peale, Would "Apoplexy" Haunt Colton's Near-asphyxial Anesthetics?



By mass-producing chromolithographs of *The Court of Death*, an allegorical painting by Rembrandt Peale (1778–1860), nitrous oxide pioneer Gardner Q. Colton (1814–1898) hoped to decorate 100,000 American homes with this "parlor ornament." On the left third of Colton's print of Peale's painting, a closer view (*above*) reveals sensual Pleasure (12) and Intemperance (14), which Peale associated with Gout (17), Fever (22), and Delirium Tremens (16). Of course, Pleasure and Intemperance were also linked with mental afflictions ranging from Hypochondria (20), Remorse (13), and Despair (23) to Suicide (15). Accumulating products of self-destructive behaviors could congest the lungs, the heart, or the brain and were depicted by Peale as Consumption (21), Dropsy (18), and Apoplexy (19), respectively. Hypoxic brain damage, often manifesting as apoplexy or stroke, would afflict patients, possibly hundreds of them, over the century following Colton's 1863 revival of using unoxygenated nitrous oxide for dental anesthesia. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc.)

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